

CLAIMS:

1 1. In a computer system having a control knob and a display screen, a method
2 comprising the steps of:

3 detecting a physical presence proximate to or in contact with the control knob for a
4 predefined period in which the control knob is stationary; and

5 displaying a display widget on the display screen responsive to said step of detecting, the
6 display widget providing status information associated with the control knob.

1 2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the status information includes volume
2 settings.

1 3. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of changing the
2 status information in the display widget responsive to an input control other than the control
3 knob while detecting the physical presence proximate to or contacting the control knob.

1 4. The method according to claim 3, wherein the input control is a pointing device.

1 5. In a computer system having a control switch and a display screen, a method
2 comprising the steps of:

3 detecting a physical presence proximate to or contacting the control switch for a first
4 predefined period in which the control switch maintains a current switch state; and

5 displaying a display widget on the display screen responsive to said step of detecting, the
6 display widget providing status information associated with the control switch.

1 6. The method according to claim 5, wherein the control switch is one of a rocker
2 switch or dial switch.

1 7. The method according to claim 5, wherein the status information identifies at least
2 one of track name, track time remaining, track length, album title and album length in a
3 multimedia application..

1 8. The method according to claim 7, wherein said step of displaying further includes
2 displaying a multimedia control panel.

1 9. The method according to claim 5, wherein the status information relates to a
2 game.

1 10. The method according to claim 5, further comprising the step of changing the
2 status information in the display widget responsive to an input control other than the control
3 switch.

1 11. The method according to claim 10, wherein the input control is a headset or a
2 microphone.

1 12. The method according to claim 5, wherein the status information identifies
2 currently running applications.

1 13. The method according to claim 12, further comprising the step of placing an
2 identified application in the foreground of the display screen, responsive to a user's selection of
3 the application using the control switch.

1 14. The method according to claim 5, wherein the status information includes a task
2 bar.

1 15. The method according to claim 5, further comprising the steps of:

detecting absence of the physical presence proximate to or contacting the control switch
for a second predefined period while displaying the display widget ; and
discontinuing display of the display widget, responsive to detecting the absence of the
physical presence.

16. In a computer system having an input device including an auxiliary control and a
display screen, a method comprising the steps of:

detecting a physical presence proximate to or contacting the auxiliary control for a first
predefined period in which the auxiliary control maintains a current control state; and

displaying a display widget on the display screen responsive to said step of detecting, the
display widget providing status information associated with the auxiliary control.

17. The method according to claim 16, wherein the auxiliary control is one of a
joystick or a wheel.

18. The method according to claim 16, wherein the auxiliary control is one of a
button or a key.

19. The method according to claim 16, wherein the physical presence is a hand of a
user.

20. The method according to claim 16, further comprising the steps of:
detecting absence of the physical presence proximate to or contacting the auxiliary
control for a second predefined period while displaying the display widget; and
discontinuing display of the display widget, responsive to detecting the absence of the
physical presence for the second predefined period.

1 21. The method according to claim 16, further comprising the steps of:

2 detecting absence of the physical presence proximate to or contacting the auxiliary

3 control for a second predefined period while displaying the display widget;

4 determining if a pointer is located within the display widget on the display screen

5 responsive to said step of detecting; and

6 discontinuing display of the display widget when the pointer is not located within the

7 display widget.

1 22. The method according to claim 16, further comprising the step of changing the

2 status information in the display widget using an input control other than the auxiliary control.

1 23. The method according to claim 22, wherein the input control is a headset or a

2 microphone.

1 24. The method according to claim 22, wherein the input control is a pointing device.

1 25. The method according to claim 24, wherein the input device is one of a mouse,

2 trackball, touchpad, keyboard, or game controller.

1 26. The method according to claim 16, wherein the status information identified only

2 applies to a single active application.

1 27. The method according to claim 16, wherein the type of status information

2 associated with the auxiliary control displayed when a first application is active is different from

3 the type of status information associated with the auxiliary control displayed when a second

4 application is active.

1 28. The method according to claim 16, wherein the status information is messaging
2 related information.

1 29. The method according to claim 28, wherein the status information includes one of
2 the number of new or unread regular or high priority messages, an in box window, brief
3 information regarding at least one of the most recently received messages, and alert status.

1 30. The method according to claim 16, wherein when a web browser is an active
2 application, the status information includes at least one of the most recently used searches, at
3 least one of the most recently obtained search results, identification of previous and next web
4 pages which may be visited, list of favorite web pages, and current page loading information.

1 31. The method according to claim 16, wherein the status information includes a task
2 bar.

1 32. The method according to claim 16, wherein the status information identifies
2 active applications.

1 33. The method according to claim 16, wherein the status information provides
2 printer status information.

1 34. The method according to claim 16, wherein the status information identifies
2 contents of a clipboard.

1 35. The method according to claim 16, wherein the status information identifies at
2 least one of time, date, location, file type and size of most recently saved file.

36. The method according to claim 16, wherein the auxiliary control is a key representing a mathematical operator, and in a spreadsheet application, the status information identifying the result if the mathematical operator is applied to data in a spreadsheet.

37. The method according to claim 16, wherein the auxiliary control is configured to control scrolling of the display screen, the status information identifying settings for the wheel.

38. The method according to claim 16, wherein the input device is one of a mouse, trackball, touchpad, keyboard, or game controller.

39. The method according to claim 16, wherein the status information relates to a game.

40. In a computer system having an input device and a display screen, a method comprising the steps of:

detecting a physical presence proximate to or contacting the input device for a first predefined period in which the control input device maintains a current control state; and

causing information displayed on the display screen to disappear responsive to said step of detecting.

41. The method according to claim 40, wherein the information includes a display widget.

42. The method according to claim 41, wherein the display widget includes a scroll bar or a tool bar.

43. The method according to claim 40, further comprising the steps of:

2 detecting absence of the physical presence proximate to or contacting the input device for
3 a second predefined period after causing the information to disappear from the display screen;
4 and
5 causing the information to reappear on the display screen, responsive to detecting the
6 absence of the physical presence for the second predefined period.

1 44. The method according to claim 40, wherein the input device is a pointing device
2 wheel.

1 45. The method according to claim 40, wherein the input device is configured to
2 control scrolling.

1 46. The method according claim 45, wherein the input device is a wheel or touchpad.

1 47. The method according to claim 40, wherein the input device is one of a button or
2 a key.